

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

762.00/2-1054

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: February 10, 1959

SUBJECT:

FEB 12 1959

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. K. Fechter of the German Delegation to the Four Power Working Group  
Mr. Edward L. Freers, Director, Office of Eastern European Affairs

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At a lunch given by the German Delegation to the Four Power Working Group, Mr. Fechter gave me what he described as his personal views with regard to some of the matters to be discussed by the group. Since his remarks were made in the presence of the head of the German Delegation, I had the impression that the lunch itself may have been set up to communicate these views to our Delegation and that they were in fact the views of the Delegation itself.

Mr. Fechter said that he had noticed the extreme reserve being maintained in the meetings of the Four Power Working Group and felt that the proceedings of the group were perhaps too official for broad discussion of substantive matters. He wondered whether the British really were prepared to talk substance or whether their questionnaire was designed primarily to evoke the attitudes of the German Delegation. He said the German Delegation was in a central position, working between the extremes of German public opinion and the Chancellor's attitude. He understood the French had very firm instructions about discussions, and as far as the German Delegation was concerned it had been instructed not to raise problems of security but to listen to the other delegations. In the light of all this, Mr. Fechter wondered whether it might not be desirable to have private discussions among members of the delegations in order to achieve a freer exchange of views.

Mr. Fechter raised the question as to whether we were prepared to have any discussion of the Aspacki Plan. I said, of course, we had had a

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discussion about this in NATO and had given our official points of view. Our position was that the Rapacki Plan as it stood and in isolation as a starting point for broader measures of disarmament and arms limitation would have dangerous effects on the Western military position. However, if there were discussion of broader aspects of European security and disarmament measures, we would be prepared to discuss features of the Rapacki Plan in that context.

Mr. Fechter said that the Germans were convinced that the reunification of Germany on a basis acceptable to them would only be possible if the Russian troops were entirely withdrawn from East Germany. Therefore some agreements on security measures would have to precede the elaboration of means for bringing about reunification. He felt that there should be an equilibrium of forces as between West Germany on the one hand with its 53,000,000 people and East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia on the other hand, with roughly the same population. Since West Germany had less troops than the other three, this would mean a reduction in the level of the latter forces. This would require withdrawal of Soviet troops and, of course, of American, British and French troops from West Germany. This last raised the question of their redeployment. He felt that they might be redeployed in the Benelux countries, France and Spain. He said he recognized that all the military leaders said that this was impossible, but he felt that this was a political question and should be dealt with on that basis.

The situation he described would raise the question of West Germany's participation in NATO. He made reference to the French formula which would give West Germany the protection of NATO but relieve West Germany of the responsibilities of NATO membership. He said he did not think the Scandinavian countries, especially, would like such a formula because they relied on the German contribution for their own military position. Mr. Fechter said the dilemma for Germany was that if they were to have full responsibility it could not afford to have anything less than the most modern weapons available to the other members of the alliance. In addition to this, no country could expect to have a political voice commensurate with its neighbors unless it had such weapons. Therefore a special status for Germany alone could not be acceptable. I asked whether there could be a special status for West Germany vis-a-vis NATO and for Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany vis-a-vis the Warsaw Pact. He said this could conceivably be an acceptable approach.

In essence, he said there were three principles regarding security which the Germans felt were essential in order to establish the conditions under which they could effectively deal with the East Germans in a move toward reunification. They were: (a) the equilibrium of forces between West Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany; (b) effective guarantees of non-interference and non-intervention; and (c) an effective warning system against surprise attack.

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The discussion then went on to the situation in East Germany. Mr. Fechter said he believed that reports of 90% opposition to the East German regime were exaggerated. There might be 90% opposition against Ulbricht and perhaps 80% opposition against the present Communist regime. Of course, in a free election there would be no question of the latter's fate. However, there was a large bureaucracy and a large middle class which had a stake in the stability of the present situation. Furthermore, the youth was susceptible to communist indoctrination and this would increasingly have its effect. It was his belief that time was working in favor of the East German regime.

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